Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and NEPA Adequacy (DNA)

U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
NEPA #: DOI-BLM-AZ-G020-2014-0006-DNA

A. Background

BLM Office: Tucson Field Office
Lease/Serial/Case File No.: N/A
Project Title/Type: Las Cienegas NCA Pronghorn Supplementation
Location of Proposed Action: Las Cienegas NCA
1st Choice: High desert grassland. 31°42'58.05"N, 110°37'12.98"W. 200 yards SE of Curly Horse Rd. UTM NAD 83 12R 0535980, 3509032; T20S, R17E, Sec. 9 N½
2nd Choice: High desert grassland. 31°42'55.98"N, 110°36'24.03"W. Approximately ½ mile east of Curly Horse Rd. UTM NAD 83 12R 0537267, 3508972; T20S, R17E, Sec. 10 N½
3rd Choice: High desert grassland. 31°43'07.22"N, 110°37'43.72"W. 100ft north of Curly Horse Rd. UTM NAD 83 12R 0535168, 3509313; T20S, R17E, Sec. 5 S½

Description of the Proposed Action: Arizona Game and Fish Dept. (AGFD) proposes to supplement the existing Sonoita and San Rafael Valley pronghorn populations, which currently exists at about 60 individuals with five bucks. Large trucks and trailers will transport the animals, but would only use existing roads. About 30-45 pronghorn would be captured in Prescott Valley and, if a capture in New Mexico is also successful, extra individuals from New Mexico may be released after other areas have their quotas. Herd numbers in the Sonoita Valley are decreasing, and fawn recruitment is too low to increase the population. With the low number of bucks, the herd is also susceptible to problems associated with inbreeding and no natural immigration occurs from other populations to increase genetic diversity. Preferred locations of pronghorn supplementation are areas where existing pronghorn are located, indicating that habitat conditions and water sources are favorable for the supplemented individuals. Therefore, AGFD is proposing release of supplemental pronghorn on BLM land, as well as private and state land, as needed.

The protocol for capturing pronghorn is as follows: Capturing pronghorn will require a centralized group located at a staging area, ground scout crews, and fixed wing and helicopter working in coordination to capture pronghorn. Personnel will prioritize and track capture efforts at the staging area. Ground based personnel as well as fixed wing and rotary aircraft will scout and relay animal locations. Once individual pronghorn are selected, Arizona Game and Fish Department follow department guidance/protocols to capture animals.

Upon successful immobilization, the helicopter lowers to the netted animal. The mugger (AZFGD staff trained to handle captured animals) restrains the animal, blindfolds it, and starts to untangle the netting. Concurrently, the helicopter lands at a safe distance and the pilot and net-gunner exit to assist with processing the animal.

At this point a telemetry/GPS collar is fitted and attached, along with an ear tag. All applicable blood, genetic, and disease samples are collected after collaring. Once the process is complete, restraints are removed. The animal is released at its capture site. If any predators begin pursuit, they are deterred to the best ability of the capture crew. Once the animal is released, capture supplies are loaded back into the helicopter and the process is repeated.

B. Conformance with the Land Use Plan (LUP) and Consistency with Related Subordinate Implementation Plans

Land Use Plan (LUP) Name: Approved Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: July 2003

☒The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUPs because **it is specifically** provided for in the following LUP decisions:

1. Fish and Wildlife Management Objective (p. 9-10)

WF-01. Restore and maintain the native diversity, natural distribution, and abundance of fish and wildlife species in the Sonoita Valley, with sufficient resources and in a manner that perpetuates naturally functioning ecosystem processes by the following:

- Reestablishing, extending the range, or supplementing populations.

WF-04 (p. 11). Use an ecosystem approach to manage the four rare habitats (i.e. grassland, riparian/wetland, mesquite bosque, and oak woodland) that support the following priority species:

- Pronghorn (desirable big game and watchable wildlife species)

WF-05 (p. 12). Manage suitable public land habitats for the recovery or reestablishment of native populations in collaboration with federal and state agencies, user groups, and other interested parties. Provide for the reintroduction of Gila topminnow into suitable habitats in accordance with the existing BLM-AGFD Memorandum of Understanding. In addition, provide for the reintroduction, or supplementation of the following endangered, threatened, candidate and priority species within suitable habitats in accordance with existing regulations, policies and agreements:

- Pronghorn

☐ The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though **it is not specifically** provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions):

_____

_____

C. Identify the applicable NEPA document(s) and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

List by name and date all applicable NEPA documents that cover the proposed action.

Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan, July 2003

List by name and date other documentation relevant to the proposed action (e.g., source drinking water assessments, biological assessment, biological opinion, watershed assessment, allotment evaluation, rangeland health standard's assessment and determinations, and monitoring).

Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan Biological Assessment, Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan Biological Opinion, Cienega Creek Watershed Proposed National Conservation Area Assessment (Sonoran Institute 1999), Springs in the Sky Island Region: Inventory, Assessment, and Management Planning Project (Sky Island Alliance 2013), Cienega Watershed Partnership State of the Watershed Report, Riparian and Upland Monitoring Data, Precipitation Data, Lessee's Grazing Reports, and Empire, Rose Tree, Mt. Bruce, Clyne, and Vera Earl Allotment Evaluations

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the current proposed action substantially the same action (or is a part of that action) as previously analyzed?

Yes. The current proposed action for supplementation of pronghorn on Las Cienegas NCA was specifically planned for in the Las Cienegas RMP:

WF-01 (p. 9-10). Restore and maintain the native diversity, natural distribution, and abundance of fish and wildlife species in the Sonoita Valley, with sufficient resources and in a manner that perpetuates naturally functioning ecosystem processes by the following:

- Reestablishing, extending the range, or supplementing populations.

WF-04 (p. 11). Use an ecosystem approach to manage the four rare habitats (i.e. grassland, riparian/wetland, mesquite bosque, and oak woodland) that support the following priority species (p. 11):

- Pronghorn (desirable big game and watchable wildlife species)

WF-05 (p. 12). Manage suitable public land habitats for the recovery or reestablishment of native populations in collaboration with federal and state agencies, user groups, and other interested parties. Provide for the reintroduction of Gila topminnow into suitable habitats in accordance with the existing BLM-AGFD Memorandum of Understanding. In addition, provide for the reintroduction, or supplementation of the following endangered, threatened, candidate and priority species within suitable habitats in accordance with existing regulations, policies and agreements:

- Pronghorn

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the current proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, resource values, and circumstances?

Yes. There were four alternatives for management of LCNCA and public lands within the Sonoita Valley Acquisition Planning District, including a no action alternative, in the Draft RMP/DEIS (August 2001). Review of public comments and management direction resulted in only minor changes to the alternatives when the Proposed RMP/FEIS was published in June 2002.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, riparian proper functioning condition [PFC] reports; rangeland health standards assessments; inventory and monitoring data; most recent lists of endangered species listing; updated BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that all new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

Yes. The existing analysis is currently valid and any new information or circumstances (from monitoring data and land health assessments) would not substantially change the analysis of the proposed pronghorn supplementation. Most recent lists of endangered species, recent documentation of the occurrence of listed species nearby (e.g. jaguar and ocelot in nearby mountain ranges), and recent designations of critical habitat (Chiricahua leopard frog and southwestern willow flycatcher, and proposed critical habitat for Mexican gartersnake and jaguar) indicate that the proposed pronghorn release sites are unlikely locations for special status species and do not contain proposed or designated critical habitat.

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing

NEPA document?

Yes. When cumulative impacts would occur, they are described at the end of each impact section for each resource. Cumulative impacts from the agency preferred alternative to terrestrial wildlife are given on page 4-80 of the Las Cienegas Proposed RMP (June 2002).

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Yes. Public involvement and interagency review for the Las Cienegas RMP was at the level of an Environmental Impact Statement. Public involvement and interagency coordination is given in Chapter 5 of the Las Cienegas Proposed RMP (page 5-1 through 5-7).

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

Name	Title	Resource/Agency Represented
Catie Fenn	Outdoor Recreation Specialist	BLM
Amy Sobiech	Archaeologist	BLM
Eric Baker	Range Management Specialist	BLM
David McIntyre	Planner	BLM
Amy Markstein	Planner	BLM
Ben Lomeli	Hydrologist	BLM
Dave Murray	Hydro-Tech	BLM
Keith Hughes	Natural Resource Specialist	BLM
JJ Swift	Facility Operations Specialist	BLM
Dan Quintana	Fuels Program Manager	BLM
Francisco Mendoza	Outdoor Recreation Planner	BLM
Andrew Atkinson	Fuel Mitigation and Prevention	BLM
Linda Dunlavey	Lands and Realty Specialist	BLM
Darrell Tersey	Natural Resource Specialist	BLM
Claire Crow	Assistant Field Manager	BLM
Jeff Simms	Fisheries Biologist	BLM
Kristen Duarte	Range Management Specialist	BLM
Dan Moore	Geologist	BLM
Karen Simms	Assistant Field Manager	BLM
Vi Hillman	Field Manager	BLM
Damon McRae	Fire Management Officer	BLM
Jim Mahoney	Outdoor Recreation Planner	BLM
Heather Swanson	Natural Resource Specialist	BLM

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the existing NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

Note: If one or more of the criteria are not met, a conclusion of conformance and/or NEPA adequacy cannot be made and this box cannot be checked

/s/ Marcia Radke
Signature of Project Lead

/s/ Amy Markstein
Signature of NEPA Coordinator

/s/ Vi Hillman — 2/7/14
Signature of Responsible Official — Date

Note: The signed CONCLUSION on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.